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ABSTRACT

With emphasis on the exciting aspects of language learning, this vocabulary improvement mini-course aims at presenting words in ways that are relevant, communicative, and enjoyable for the college freshman. Advocating a multisensory approach to vocabulary that involves a "hear it, say it," then, "read it, write it" sequence, the mini-course offers eight pages of word activities organized according to the following format: words with stories associated with them; "a couple of roots that took," or words that are related to one another; interesting foreign words or phrases used in speech; and word games and oddities that require the student to coin new words or to interpret coined words. (MAI)

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ONE DAY, A FUN DAY FOR VOCABULARY:

MINI COURSE.

VOCABULARY BUILDING

SHIPPENSBURG STATE COLLEGE

SHIPPENSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

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INTRODUCTION

Most standard English dictionaries define approximately 500,000 words -- 490,000 more than most Americans know, but hopefully maybe only 465,000 more than some of us! At the rate the Verbal SAT score is falling, however, there is no doubt that we, as reading teachers, are failing miserably as ministers of our own healthy, exciting language.

Still I have yet to meet a college student who doesn't wish to remediate this condition, nor one who doesn't feel himself word-impoverished. He can sometimes be helped, if he is assiduous and self-disciplining, by assigning him modules or exercises in published workbooks or other media-referenced materials. Yet words were initially invented for communication; and therefore it is through this humanistic channel that they become most easily a part of any one person's vocabulary. So, however you teach, the "Hear it, Say it," then "Read it and Write it" sequence is probably the most natural; and because of its multi-sensory approach, the most effective.

The skeleton key to any method is undoubtedly <u>context</u> and just as a toddler soon learns what "cookie" means; so can a freshman learn to feel comfortable with "eclectic." In your teaching experiences remember always to shy away from THE LIST, those ten weekly words that must be authenticated by a dictionary or memorized by next Tuesday. Instead, direct your appeal to students through their own favorite truisms: relevance and fun. Try to make vocabulary building as fascinating a game in the classroom as Password is on T.V. or the Jumble and Crossword Puzzle are on the subway.

The mini course that is presented here should give you some ideas on how to make vocabulary day, a fun day.

1. A Word with a Tale.

"Ostracize" To banish or exclude from a group; to shun. In ancient Greece a person who was considered dangerous or who had committed a crime was banished from Greece -- the worst possible punishment! This was done by a vote by the people, marked on pieces of oyster shell. The Greek word for "oyster" was "ostrean."

2. A Couple of Roots that Took.

a. "ped" or "pod" Latin for "foot"

pedal, pedestrian, pedestal, peddler, pedigree (when you draw the chart of all your ancestors, it looks like a crane's foot, or pedigree), tripod

Expedite: To speed up (walk fast?)

Podiatrist: A doctor who specializes in care of the feet

b. "bi" Latin for "two"

bicycle, binocular, biennial, bifocal, bigamist, bilingual

Bicameral: Composed of two houses, a bicameral legislature

Bifurcate: Divide into two parts or branches.

3. Foreign Flavor

a. "ad nauseum" Latin for "to a point of nausea or to a disgusting degree"

b. "alter ego" Latin for "another self;" so a constant companion or inseparable friend.

4. Word Games and Oddities

"Acronym" A word formed from the initial letters of a name or word. Biblical scholars tell us that the sign of the fish used by early Christians was an acronym. The Greek word, "ichthys" stood for the words, Jesus Christ, God's son and Savior.

Modern examples: WAC, AWOL, SNAFU, NATO, SEATO, SCUBA (self-contained underwater apparatus). Washingtonese is full of them. How many can you remember?

1. A Word with a Tale

"Sycophant" — A person who practices the use of excessive flattery or servility to hold or gain a position. From the Greek, meaning "fig shower"

If you want to get a good grade in school, you polish up an apple and put it on the teacher's desk. Then you are an apple-polisher. The Greeks had a name for it: "fig shower." This was the guy who informed the officers in charge when the figs were being taken from the sacred groves or when the fig dealers were dodging the tax.

2. A Couple of Roots that Took

a. "mono" — Latin for "one," frequently used as a prefix

monocle, monopoly, monotony, monk, monostery, mono-rail, mononucleosis, monolith, monosodium glutennate

Monogamy: The custom of being married to only one person at a time

Monogenic: Bearing only male offspring or female offspring

b. "theo" — Greek for "God"

theology, theocratic, theocrasy, Theodore, atheist

Monotheism: The doctrine or belief that there is only one God

Theomania: A form of madness in which a person believes himself to be God.

3. Foreign Flavor

a. "bon vivant" — French for "good living," a person who enjoys good food and drink -- lives luxuriously

b. "nouveau riche" — French for "new rich," one who has lately become rich; usually used disparagingly to imply ostentation

4. Word Games and Oddities

"Palindrome" — A word or phrase that reads the same backwards or forwards. The story goes that the first words ever uttered were a palindrome. In the Garden of Eden Adam said, "Madam, I'm Adam" and Eve shyly responded, "Eve."

Other examples: "Radar," "Too hot to hoot," and "Able was I ere I saw Elba."

1. A Word with a Tale.

"Shibboleth" — A password or favorite phrase of a party or sect. Something that distinguishes one type or group of persons. Hebrew for "ear of corn."

The story comes from Biblical history. It seems the Ephraimites, who were at war with the Gileadites, could not pronounce the "sh" sound. When the fugitives would try to slip through the lines, they were asked to say "shibboleth" to test them. The ones who answered "sibboleth" were slain. In World War II American Intelligence used a shibboleth to differentiate the Japanese from the Chinese. Japanese have difficulty with our letter "r."

2. A Couple of Roots that Took

a. "corp" — Latin for "body"

corps, corpse, corporal (leader of a body of troops), corporation, incorporate

Corpulent: Stout, fat, obese

Corpuscle: A blood cell

b. "psyche" — Greek for "soul" or "breath"

psychology, psychic, psychotic, psychiatrist (check the difference between this word and "psychologist").

Psyche: The soul, spirit, or mind

Psychopath: A mentally deranged or unstable person

3. Foreign Flavor

a. "ersatz" — German for substitute material; therefore shoddy and inferior or false.

b. "hinterland" — German for remote regions, the frontier, "the sticks."

4. Word Games and Oddities

"Blend Words" or "Telescope Words" — Combinations of two words. Some of the most common are "motel" (motor and hotel), "smog" (smoke and fog), "brunch" (breakfast and lunch).

Time magazine with its "cinemactor" and "snoopervise" is a master of this technique although it was originated by Lewis Carroll in his "Jabberwocky" in which he invented "slithy," "mimsy," and "chortle." Figure them out.

1. A Word with a Tale

"Laconic" From the Greek state, Laconia, of which Sparta was the capital. The Spartans were known for their paucity of words. Once when they refused to surrender to the Athenians, the herald said, "If we enter your country, we'll burn everything to the ground." The Spartan leader answered, "If!"

2. A Couple of Roots that Took

a. "mal" Latin for "bad"

malady, malaria, malice, malodorous, maladjusted, malevolence

Malaise: General feeling of physical discomfort or uneasiness

Malfeasance: Official misconduct; breach of law by a public official in the course of his duties

b. "eu" Greek for "good"

euthanasia, euphonious, eulogy, Europe (a good place), eugenics

Euphemism: A mild expression to replace an ugly one ("passed away" instead of "died")

Eudemon A good spirit

3. Foreign Flavor

a. "al fresco" Italian for "outdoors." When we dine on the terrace, it is "al fresco."

b. "a cappella" Italian for "without accompaniment." A chorus will frequently sing "a cappella."

4. Word Games and Oddities

"Malapropisms" Mrs. Malaprop (meaning "not appropriate") was a character in Sheridan's Rivals. She had the habit of confusing similar-sounding words with hilarious results. Archie Bunker on T.V. does the same thing today. He might say:

"She's on a diet with no sugar because she's "diabolic."

"Every day she takes another shot of "insolence."

1. A Word with a Tale

"Chauvinism" Prejudiced belief in the superiority of one's own group or excessive, blind patriotism

This word hit the headlines several years ago in the now-familiar phrase "male chauvinistic pig." Few people know, however, that it is a derivation from a man's name: Nicholas Chauvin, a soldier, who was so devoted to Napoleon that it became laughable. Like Lord Sandwich and Captain Boycott, his name was introduced into our language.

2. A Couple of Roots that Took

a. "syn" Greek for "together" or "with"

synonym, synchronize (put together in time), syndicate, synopsis, synthetic

Syndrome: A group of symptoms that together indicates a disease. Recently it has been used broadly to describe signs of a condition other than medical.

Synod: Any convention or council

b. "sub" Latin for "under;" usually used as a prefix

subway, subterranean, suburb, subaltern, subservient, sublime, subordinate

Subsume: To consider as part of a larger whole; to place under a general idea, principle etc.

Suborn: To bribe or to induce by underhanded means

3. Foreign Flavor

a. "potpourri" French for a miscellaneous collection of objects or ideas. Watch the pronunciation! POE pour EE

b. "vendetta" A hereditary blood feud between two families, from the Italian word for "revenge"

4. Word Games and Oddities

"Oxymoron" Actually meaning "sharp-foolish," an oxymoron is a witty remark, absurd because of the use of opposites. How can anything be "mighty weak," "pretty ugly," "bittersweet," "really phony," or "mournfully optimistic?"

1. A Word with a Tale

"Gauche" — Awkward, crude, tactless. From the French, "gauche," meaning "left" or "left-handed"

Southpaws have always had to suffer. Legend has it that the left hand guarded the heart with the shield while the right hand wielded the sword. Therefore, anything to do with the left was unlucky or even evil; witness the Latin, "sinister," meaning "left." Conversely the Latin, "dexter," meaning "right" shows up in "dexterous" and "dexterity," both complimentary words. The French, "a droit," which also means "right," is now our word, "adroit," another example.

2. A Couple of Roots that Took

a. "pan" — Greek for "all"

panorama, Pan America, pantomime, pancreas (an internal organ, having all flesh and no bone), pandemonium (Hell, or a place for "all demons")

Panacea: Cure for all diseases or problems

Pandemic: Distributed or prevalent throughout the world

b. "omnis" — Latin for "all"

omnibus, omnipresent, omniverous

Omnipotent: Infinite in power, as God or a diety

Omniscience: State of having unlimited knowledge

3. Foreign Flavor

a. "aficianado" — Spanish for an ardent devotee

b. "bonanza" — A spectacular windfall. From the Spanish, "smooth sea"

4. Word Games and Oddities

"Rebus" — A form of pictograph that was known in ancient times. It is said that the following addressed letter was correctly delivered by the U.S. Mail:

HILL
JOHN = John Underhill, Andover, Mass.
MASS

What's this?

$\frac{I}{8}$ = I overate!

1. A Word with a Tale

"Trivia" From two Latin words, "tri," meaning "three" and "via," meaning "road." Thereby lies an interesting tale. In the days of Rome's greatest glory, three roads led north out of the city. At the juncture of the highways an enterprising Roman built an inn which he called the Trivia. It soon became a popular place to meet friends for a glass of wine and some gossip. Most of the news exchanged was unimportant and therefore "trivial" The old inn is also the father of "trivial" and "trifle."

2. A Couple of Roots that Took

a. "bio" Greek for "life"

biology, biological, biography, biographer, biophysics, biopsy

Bionics: The study of certain functions of man and the application therefrom to the designing of computers. (The Bionic Man?)

Macrobiotics: The practice of promoting longevity, principally by means of diet. Yogurt?

b. "physio" Greek for "natural" or "nature"

physiology, physiologist, physician, physics, physiotherapy

Physiognomy: The art of reading a person's character from his facial features

Physique: The body, considered in reference to its muscular development

3. Foreign Flavor

a. "Persona non grata" Latin for an unacceptable person

b. "Sub Rosa" Latin for "under the rose;" privately, confidentially

4. Word Games and Oddities

"Spoonerism" Many people when excited or embarrassed transpose the initial letters of words. A Victorian preacher, W.A. Spooner, gave his name to this kind of tangle talk. He is quoted as saying, "Pardon me, Padam, this pie is occupued. May I sew you to another sheet?" A "crushing blow" could thereby become a "blushing crow." The Dean of our college, Dr. Paul Smay, was once introduced by a student as, "Dr. Small Pay!"

1. A Word with a Tale

"Supercilious" — Condescending, snobbish, arrogant. From the Latin, "super," meaning "over" and "cilium," meaning "eyebrow." When things are unworthy of your notice or attention, do you raise your eyebrow slightly? The Romans did too, and so "supercilious" became the word to describe the disdainful, hoity-toity person.

2. A Couple of Roots that Took

a. "hydro" — Greek for "water"

hydrant, hydraulic, hydrogen, hydrofoil

Hydrography: Science of mapping the surface waters of the earth

Hydroscope: A device for viewing objects under the water

b. "aqua" — Latin for "water"

aqueduct, aqua-lung, aquarium, aquaplane, aquatic, aquamarine

Aqueous: Like water or containing water

Aquarius: Sign of the Zodiac, named for the "Water Bearer," a constellation

3. Foreign Flavor

a. "coup d'etat" — French for "successful move of state;" so, a sudden and decisive action in politics, usually changing the government illegally or by force

b. "coup de grace" — French for "death blow;" so any finishing stroke, especially one delivered mercifully to end suffering

4. Word Games and Oddities

"Fun with Phobias" — Here are a few you might like to spring on your friends!

	acrophobia	fear of high places
	zoophobia	" animals
	claustrophobia	" closed places
	clinophobia	" going to bed
	sophophobia	" knowledge
	dentophobia	" going to the dentist
	gynophobia	" women
	anemophobia	" hurricanes
	lalophobia	" speaking
AND	pantophobia	" everything!